



U.S. Department of Justice  
United States Attorney  
District of Kansas

## NEWS RELEASE

Eric Melgren, U.S. Attorney

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**Contact: Jim Cross**

(316) 269-6481

**Headquarters**  
1200 Epic Center  
301 N. Main  
Wichita, Kansas 67202  
(316)269-6481  
FAX (316)269-6484

**Topeka Office**  
444 Quincy  
Topeka, Kansas 66683

**Kansas City Office**  
500 State Avenue  
Suite 360  
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

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Dec. 22, 2004

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### FORMER REGISTERED NURSE SENTENCED FOR TAMPERING WITH HOSPITAL MEDICATIONS

KANSAS CITY, KAN. – United States Attorney Eric Melgren announced that Susan L. Harris, 32, Lansing, Kan., has been sentenced to prison.

Harris was sentenced by U.S. District Judge G. Thomas VanBebber to 51 months in federal prison to be followed by two years of supervised release on one count of tampering with a consumer product.

Harris pleaded guilty July 1, 2004. In her plea, she admitted that in late 2003 she began working as a registered nurse at Cushing Memorial Hospital in Leavenworth, Kan. While at the hospital on or about Jan. 23, 2004 she removed a vial of Demerol from a medication cart, broke the seal on the vial, removed some of the Demerol solution and replaced it with saline solution. Then she readjusted the seal so the tampering was not immediately evident.

On Jan. 23, 2004, the Demerol solution she had tampered with was administered to a patient to relieve pain caused by a bowel obstruction. The patient did not receive any relief from the pain.

During sentencing, the judge considered testimony and reports from a psychologist hired by Harris and a psychiatrist retained by the government relating to Harris' claim that she suffered from diminished mental capacity at the time of the offense. The judge determined that the evidence did not support the defendant's claim of diminished capacity and overruled her motion for a lesser sentence.

Melgren commended the work of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, which investigated the case, and Assistant U.S. Attorney Marietta Parker, who prosecuted the case.

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